

shore, near the mouth of the estuary of the Plata. These countries consist either of an undulating surface, clothed with turf, or of perfectly level plains with enormous beds of thistles. Except on the banks of the rivers, trees nowhere grow; there are, however, thickets in some of the valleys, in the more hilly parts of Banda Oriental. During the winter and spring of this hemisphere, a considerable quantity of rain falls, and the plains of turf are then everywhere verdant; but in summer the country assumes a brown and parched appearance.

BAHIA BLANCA forms a large bay, in latitude  $39^{\circ}$  S. on a part of the coast, which falls within the territory of the province of Buenos Ayres, but which from its physical conditions would more properly be classed with Patagonia. The tertiary plains of PATAGONIA, extend from the Strait of Magellan to the Rio Negro, which is commonly assumed as their Northern boundary. This space of more than seven hundred miles in length, and in breadth reaching from the Cordillera to the Atlantic Ocean, is everywhere characterised by the dreary uniformity of its landscape. Nearly desert plains, composed of a thick bed of shingle, and often strewn over with sea-shells, (plainly indicating that the land has been covered within a recent period by the sea,) are but rarely interrupted by hills of porphyry, and other crystalline rocks. The plains support scattered tufts of wiry grass, and stunted bushes; whilst in the broad flat-bottomed valleys, dwarf thorn-bearing trees, barely ornamented with the scantiest foliage, sometimes unite into thickets; and here the few feathered inhabitants of these sterile regions resort. There is an extreme scarcity of water; and where it is found, especially if in lakes, it is generally as salt as brine. The sky in summer is cloudless, and the heat in consequence, considerable; whereas the frosts of winter are, sometimes, severe. The principal localities visited by the Beagle, were the RIO NEGRO, in latitude  $41^{\circ}$  S., PORT DESIRE, PORT ST. JULIAN, and SANTA CRUZ. At the latter place, a party, under the command of Captain FitzRoy, followed up the river in boats, to within a few miles of the Cordillera; and an opportunity was thus afforded of verifying the nature of the country in its entire breadth. At the Rio Negro the plains are much more thickly covered with bushes, (chiefly acacias,) than in any other part of Patagonia.

TIERRA DEL FUEGO may be supposed to include all the broken land south of a line joining the opposite mouths of the Strait of Magellan. The land is moun-

tainous, and may be aptly compared to a lofty chain, partly submerged in the sea;—bays and channels occupying the position of valleys. The Eastern side almost exclusively consists of clay-slate; the Western, of primary, and various plutonic formations. The mountains, from the water's edge, to within a short distance of the lower limit of perpetual snow, are everywhere (excepting on the exposed western shores) concealed by an impervious forest, the trees of which do not periodically shed their leaves. On the East coast, the outline of the land shows that tertiary formations, like those of Patagonia, extend south of the Strait of Magellan; but with the exception of this part, it is rare to find even a small space of level ground; and where such occurs, a thick bed of peat invariably covers the surface. The climate is of that kind which has been denominated insular: the winters are far from being excessively cold, whilst the summers are gloomy, boisterous, and seldom cheered by the rays of the sun. In all seasons, a large quantity of rain falls. Hence, from the physical conditions of Tierra del Fuego, all the land animals must live either on the sea beach, (and in this class the Aborigines may be included) or within the humid and entangled forests.

The FALKLAND ISLANDS are situated in the same latitude as the Eastern entrance of the Strait of Magellan, and about 270 miles East of it. The climate is nearly the same as in Tierra del Fuego, but the surface of the land, instead of being as there, concealed by one great forest, does not support a single tree. We see on every side a withered and coarse herbage, with a few low bushes, which spring from the peaty soil of an undulating moorland. Scattered hills, and a central range of quartz rock, protrude through formations of clay-slate and sand-stone (belonging to the Silurian epoch,) which compose the lower country.

The structure of the west coast of South America, from the Strait of Magellan northward to latitude  $38^{\circ}$ , in its greater part, (as far north as Chiloe) is very similar to that of Tierra del Fuego. The climate likewise is similar,—being gloomy, boisterous, and extremely humid; and, consequently, the land is concealed by an almost impenetrable forest. In the northern part of this region, the temperature of course is considerably higher than near the Strait of Magellan; but nevertheless it is much less so, than might have been anticipated from so